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ABSTRACT

This digest addresses the necessity for holistic learning--the integration of intellectual, social, and emotional aspects of undergraduate student learning. Research findings, theoretical models, and the relationship and interdependency of these developmental areas are briefly reviewed and recommendations are provided to faculty, administrators, and institutions on ways to enhance holistic learning. The review finds a growing literature base supporting the fact that cognitive, social, and emotional processes are inextricably linked. Recommendations to individual faculty and student affairs professionals are developed based on liberation theory, constructivist pedagogy, the critical cultural perspective, and collaborative learning theory. Implications for institutions moving toward developing a focus on holistic learning are considered including providing visionary, persistent, and pervasive leadership; promoting student involvement in learning; developing learning communities; enhancing the educational climate of residence halls; and intentionally influencing the socialization of faculty and student affairs professionals. (Contains seven references.) (DB)

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Enhancing Student Learning
Intellectual, Social and Emotional Integration

Patrick G. Love and Anne Goodsell Love

The need to focus on holistic learning--the integration of intellectual, social, and emotional aspects of undergraduate student learning--has been voiced periodically throughout the last half century (American Council of Education 1949; Boyer 1987; Brown 1972; Miller and Prince 1976; Williamson 1957), and recent research on student experience and college impact has provided additional fuel to these arguments (e.g., Astin 1984, 1993; Pascarella and Terenzini 1991; Springer, Terenzini, Pascarella, and Nora 1995; Tinto 1993). The roles of faculty and student affairs professionals have become so disparate that neither focus on student learning to their fullest extent. Each focuses on a part of the whole, but in so doing students' education becomes only the sum of its parts, not more.

Furthermore, higher education has struggled for a long time with the increasing fragmentation of the learning process, of disciplines and knowledge, of the administrative structure, and of community. Strong cultural forces have acted as barriers to efforts at reforming and transforming higher education, but now forces within and out of higher education have gathered that are exerting tremendous pressure on the entire enterprise. These include the growing body of research linking intellectual, social, and emotional processes, a continuing paradigm shift in the social sciences and education, the emergence of disciplines that incorporate the impact of social processes and issues of affect (e.g., Women's Studies; Pan-African Studies; Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Studies), continuing reform efforts (e.g., total quality management, general education and core curriculum reemergence), and external pressures (e.g., the accountability movement, mandated outcomes assessment, and financial cutbacks at the state and federal level). The need for reform is clear.

What does research say about the relationship among the intellectual, social, and emotional elements of student learning?

Traditional literature regarding college students' intellectual, social, and emotional development is dominated by three underlying assumptions: 1) student affairs professionals deal solely with social and emotional development; 2) faculty deal solely with intellectual development; and 3) the ways to integrate intellectual, social and emotional development are by linking in-class and out-of-class experiences and by linking student affairs professionals and faculty. This report views the intellectual, social, and emotional divide from a broader and more inclusive perspective which recognizes that student learning can and should be integrated in additional ways.

A growing literature base reinforces the fact that cognitive (Throughout this report we use three sets of interchangeable terms: cognitive and intellectual, social and interpersonal, and emotional and affective.), social, and emotional processes are inextricably linked. For example, recent theories of cognitive development, especially Baxter Magolda (1992, 1995), Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), and Gilligan (1982), clearly acknowledge the role played by social context and interpersonal relationships. It is also recognized that learning is facilitated or hampered by emotions (Boekaerts 1993; Goleman 1995), that emotions drive learning and memory (Sylvester 1994), and that depressed mood states are often correlated with decreased motivation in the classroom (Peterson and Seligman 1984).

What can individual faculty and student affairs professionals do to enhance holistic learning?

Traditional educational practices, especially teaching pedagogies that reflect the dominance of and reliance on lecture as the sole method of classroom instruction, are clearly under attack (Freire 1978; Giroux 1983; Schniedewind and Davidson 1987). In their place have proliferated such interrelated philosophies, pedagogies, and practices as liberation theory (Freire 1970; McClaren and Leonard 1993; Shor 1992), constructivist pedagogy (Brooks and Brooks 1993), adopting a critical cultural perspective (Rhoads and Black 1995), and collaborative learning (Bruffee 1987, 1993; Gabelnick, MacGregor, Matthews, and Smith 1990; Goodsell, Maher, Tinto, Smith, and MacGregor 1992). These practices challenge the traditional models of teaching and learning because they acknowledge, address, and make use of social and emotional influences on learning. By changing the nature of authority in learning experiences or by bringing the personal experiences of students to bear on a topic, these practices hold tremendous potential for reshaping individual practice and, in turn, higher education.

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A basic premise of liberation theory is that society's cultural system perpetuates power relationships and holds people (and groups) in place like an invisible web (Freire 1970). Freire argued that the educational system must be transformed through praxis, which is "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire 1970, p. 36). Constructivist pedagogy is based on the premise that teachers "must provide a learning environment where students search for meaning, appreciate uncertainty, and inquire responsibly" (Jackson 1993, p. v). It recognizes that emphasis on performance and giving the right answers results in little long-term recall, whereas a focus on learning results in greater long-term understanding and ability to use the concepts and information out of the classroom (Katz 1985). Constructivist pedagogy helps students "to take responsibility for their own learning, to be autonomous thinkers, to develop integrated understandings of concepts, and to pose--and seek to answer--important questions" (Brooks and Brooks 1993, p. 13).

Similarly, adopting a critical cultural perspective recognizes the strength and embeddedness of the current culture and subcultures (Rhoads and Black 1995). This perspective requires that the underlying assumptions of our current system of higher education be identified, analyzed, and changed if effective and lasting change is to occur regarding student learning. Educators--both faculty and student affairs professionals--must examine their assumptions and values, as well as how they are put into practice.

Collaborative learning strategies enhance learning by actively incorporating social and affective dynamics between students, and between students and faculty. Such strategies are based on the idea that acquiring and creating knowledge is an active social process which students need to practice; it is not a process in which students are spectators, sitting passively in a lecture hall (Bruffee 1984, 1993).

What can institutions do to enhance holistic learning?

Implications for institutions moving toward developing an ethos of holistic learning include providing visionary, persistent, and pervasive leadership, promoting student involvement in learning, developing learning communities, enhancing the educational climate of residence halls, and intentionally influencing the socialization of faculty and student affairs professionals.

Persistent leadership is required because cultures themselves are quite persistent (Kuh 1993a; Schein 1985), and pervasive leadership implies both that the leadership of the institution must be seen as pervading the institution and that multiple leaders supporting and pushing the transformation must come from throughout the institution and its hierarchy. Methods to promote student involvement include expanding the number of leadership roles on campus, creating environments and situations where all students have opportunities to participate and contribute, fostering and rewarding student-initiated opportunities, and providing formal and informal awards for involvement (Kuh, Schuh, and Whitt 1991).

The development of learning communities requires collaboration between traditional faculty and student affairs areas, and in doing so breaks down many of the barriers to enhancing students' holistic learning. Students in learning communities provide social, emotional, and intellectual support for each other's learning, and learning communities are ideal places for faculty members to implement collaborative learning strategies.

Institutions also must pay closer attention to the cultural socialization and orientation of its members. Institutions can influence the socialization of faculty and student affairs professionals through teaching assistant training programs, student affairs graduate preparation programs, and on-going professional staff training.

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